

## Naval War College Review

---

Volume 6  
Number 7 *September*

Article 5

---

1953

# Strategic Services in 'Cold War'

William J. Donovan  
*U.S. Army (Ret.)*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

---

### Recommended Citation

Donovan, William J. (1953) "Strategic Services in 'Cold War'," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 6 : No. 7 , Article 5.  
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol6/iss7/5>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu](mailto:repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu).

## **STRATEGIC SERVICES IN 'COLD WAR'**

A Lecture delivered  
at the Naval War College  
on 7 May 1953 by

*Major General William J. Donovan, U. S. A. (Ret.)*

One of the most ruthless despots in the history of the world has been dead for several weeks. The debate continues to rage as to whether the 'cold war' which he initiated will slow down or turn into a 'hot war.' 'Hot' or 'cold,' everyone agrees that it is a war. Whether it is fought on the battlefield of Korea or in the ballot boxes of Italy, it remains a war which involves the survival of the kind of life we want to live.

We are now confronted by a new tactic in this struggle—a new offensive called a *peace offensive*. I can only pray that we shall not be deluded by our own hopes. To avoid such a delusion, there are three things we should remember:—

*One* is that the goal of the Communists has not changed. Have they disavowed their aim of violent revolution? Have they withdrawn their political paratroops from behind our lines? They have not. If there is one constant in Communist dogma, it is that the ultimate goal must always be world domination.

A *second* thing to remember is that while tactics may change, Communist methods do not disappear. Conspiracy, subversion and lies remain the weapons in their arsenal and they will continue to be used wherever they can be most effectively employed.

And, *thirdly*, let us not fool ourselves into thinking that Malenkov stands ready to throw out 30 years of Communist education so as to embrace the West in sympathetic understanding. If he is anything, he is a trained and loyal disciple of Stalin. Malenkov did not accept control of the Soviet regime to destroy it.

Let us also remember this: Whatever the Soviet motives, their peace offensive is well timed—not only to jeopardize the whole fabric of our European defense, but also to upset our efforts in the Far East. Our own government is under severe pressure to reduce military and foreign spending; and, if this happens, our material and mental preparedness will be reduced accordingly. The power struggle continues and this new offensive can be even more dangerous to our goals than a full-fledged military campaign.

The terms of President Eisenhower has set down as the only basis on which he would conclude a political settlement are terms which it is unlikely the Communists will accept. They are terms dictated from a position of strength; terms demanding that the Soviet octopus draw back its arms on all sides—in Asia, and in Europe. The President has made it plain that the peace he seeks is not the peace of weakness, appeasement, or surrender.

Let us look first at the problem of Asia. The seizure of China was for Communism a major victory. The full consequences of that triumph have yet to unfold, not alone in China but throughout Asia and the rest of the world.

In China, we see an economic and social revolution of those who sought to escape from their wretchedness. The Kremlin, through the Chinese Communist Army, has exploited this upsurge.

Even at the time of the Bolshevik Revolution, in 1917, the Soviets had their eye on China. Stalin nurtured and increased the Chinese Red Army from 25,000 in 1937 to a force of 300,000 in 1945. In the conquest of China, that was the heart of his strategy.

Once China is consolidated, Stalin's conquest will be extended throughout Southeast Asia, down the same path the Japanese followed through Indo-China, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Siam, Malaya, Indonesia and Burma—all the way to India.

India is a country of great economic potential. It has a reservoir of high-class military manpower. With Ceylon, it dominates the Indian Ocean and the vital sea lanes between Europe, Asia and the Far East. Once Asia is secured, the Communist forces can be turned against Europe and the United States.

How can we prevent the Kremlin from consolidating its gains in the Far East?

Let us try to answer this question in terms of a 'cold war'—the war we are already in—and let us appraise the weapons we have, apart from those of a conventional shooting war. The manpower can come from those countries whose leaders recognize the common interest we share with them. We ask in Asia the same questions that we asked in Europe: "Are you prepared to fight for your own liberties? Are you ready to resist your conqueror?"

Propaganda, properly used, can be a very important stimulus in arousing resistance movements on the mainland—whether by radios, pamphlets or leaflets.

The world should know that, while much must still be done, a well-conducted economic and military aid program has been set up to improve conditions in Formosa and reorganize the Chinese Nationalist forces.

It should be stressed also that under direction of American officers the Chinese troops on Formosa are being supplied with modern arms and equipment and that Chinese guerrilla forces are active on the mainland of China.

Operational nuclei can be organized—small, well-trained, well-screened cadres of men—to train and activate a resistance force which in turn could organize the countryside. The active support of the people is the first aim. Also, as was done by General Chennault in the last war in setting up the Flying Tigers, a volunteer international air force could be established in Formosa.

There are many regions in China which offer ideal areas for resistance organization due to their topography, tradition and the independence of their people.

China will not fall into our hands like a ripe pear. Were we to make public evidence of our belief that this could happen, it would be viewed by the Chinese Communist as weakness on our part.

With Communist China, as with the Soviet Union, we should harbor no hopes as to the chance of winning it as a friend or ally—our aim should be to halt and prevent Mao's expansionism.

Unconventional methods alone can not overcome Communist China. We, as a people, are inclined to rely upon some single gadget for victory. Some think guerrilla warfare alone could do it; others think propaganda is the one effective device. No single measure is enough. But if we make a fist of all our resources—propaganda, deception, ideology, sabotage, guerrilla tactics and the threat of military support—then, every blow would carry a real impact. Such a program would at least delay the consolidation of Communist power; slow up the advance of Communists in Southeast Asia; provide safe areas in the interior for Nationalist units; bring constant headaches to Red authority and breed chaos and confusion.

With that as our objective, our immediate job is to bolster the countries on China's rim, to reveal the Kremlin's aims for what they are, and to show them that their real and present danger is Soviet imperialism. Our task is not only to provide the weapons of war where that can be done, but also the constructive, humanitarian aid that no one else in the world—certainly not Mao—can give them: medicines, for example, and education in the cure of tropical diseases.

The villages of Asia cannot be defended or liberated by military means alone.

Chiang Kai-shek's failure to carry out the land reform which Sun Yat-sen considered imperative was a decisive factor in swinging peasant sympathy to the Communists. When the Communists conquered China, they immediately distributed the land. The Communists implemented a land reform in North Korea as early as March, 1946; while in South Korea, the reform of 1948 affected only former Japanese property. The more comprehensive general reform of June, 1949, passed after considerable American prodding of a pro-landlord government, was not yet put into force when the war began.

A policy of radical agrarian change need be no monopoly of the Kremlin-dominated world. We can do as much; indeed, we can do better! In post-war Japan, a comprehensive land reform which satisfied the peasants was carried out in October, 1946—almost as early as the North Korean reform. Such a program, extended to other lands and implemented by technical assistance, is Point Four; not in lofty aspirations for the future, but in terms of the present practical need for a pair of pants, a bowl of rice and a chance for a healthy body. As an example, read the reports of the effect of new-found drugs in arresting tuberculosis in Korea where there has always been a high incidence of that disease.

And while we instruct them in the cure of their ills, we can teach them to defend themselves. We can bring them tough guerrilla fighters to teach them tough guerrilla fighting. We can provide the equipment, the arms, the radios, the printing presses, the teachers of new methods in industry, farming and schooling. Without these, plans and blueprints will be wasted.

You don't measure the success of irregular warfare in terms of battles won and cities destroyed. You don't hope to meet and defeat a powerful enemy in the field. In irregular war, the object is delay; the tactic, hit-and-run again and again; the targets, the small enemy forces, the weak convoy—to breed in the mind of the individual enemy the sense of isolation and the fear of

capture. It was that kind of war that defeated Napoleon in Spain and knocked him out in Russia.

Let me give you a few examples of what I have in mind. During World War II, in every trouble spot the details of our problem were different. The Japanese, for instance, had overrun Siam. Because of Siam's central strategic position in Southeast Asia, it was essential for us to establish information sources there. At the request of the Siamese government, we had trained 40 Siamese in America in the various techniques of guerrilla warfare, dropped them with 40 Americans behind the Japanese lines into Siam, and from them gathered priceless information of enemy intentions. The Siamese prime minister was skilled in this kind of warfare. In his own palace, he gave shelter and protection for O. S. S. men and set up a radio transmitter by which daily reports were sent to Washington by way of Ceylon.

In China, at the request of Chiang Kai-shek, we trained commando units based on the operations of Lawrence of Arabia. But where Lawrence used horses and camels, we used jeeps and parachutes.

We armed and equipped Kachin and Karen tribes in North Burma to fight, harass and delay Japanese troops of occupation. These tribes were trained by Americans skilled in communications, sabotage and secret intelligence. In that area, a volunteer native force of 12,000 fighting men were loyal to us throughout the war.

We also were in contact with Chinese pirates and guerrillas in the mountainous coastal regions on each side of the Fukien-Kwangtung border north of Swatow and south of Foochow. These pirates had been operating for years in defiance of local, provincial and national Chinese authorities. They were eager and willing to carry out attacks on the Japanese with our help. As a result, we were able to post radios aboard their junks. We gave them limpets

which were used to blow up Japanese ships in their ports. With imaginative leadership, they would be as willing to help us now as they were then.

Asia is one strategic theatre of which Korea, Indo-China, Malaya and the Philippines are as integral a part as are Siam, Indonesia, Burma and India.

A Pacific pact is as essential in our over-all defense as is a NATO pact in the Atlantic. Urgency requires we take the initiative in obtaining the cooperation of other nations to make such a pact effective.

Asia is one problem, pressing and immediate, but Asia is not all. The unorthodox war must be fought simultaneously in Europe in three different areas:

- (1) Inside the Soviet Union itself;
- (2) In the satellite countries already enslaved; and
- (3) In the countries of Western Europe which stand in the Kremlin's path of expansion.

In each area, though the methods vary, the goal is the same: to prevent Soviet expansion and consolidation; to give moral and physical support to our allies and to keep the enemy off-balance until the Free Nations are strong.

This kind of war is a brave man's war and a poor man's war. It doesn't cost billions and it doesn't fill large cemeteries, but its results can be incalculable. We can put our people into countries behind the Iron Curtain, not to arouse the population to premature and futile revolt when they have no weapons, but to foment unrest and discontent, and sustain hope.

Within the area of the Soviet Union, the Soviet's concern as to their people's unity discloses a weakness ripe for exploitation.



The jugular vein in this war is the Russian people. For the past few years, disaffected elements within the population of the Soviet Union and its satellites have run great risks to escape into the American zone. They have taken these risks even though they were uncertain as to their reception by Americans or that they would be turned back by them to the Soviet authorities.

At the end of the war, the United States had discouraged and largely dissipated the potential of the Soviet emigration. As a result of the exchange agreement concluded at Yalta, the great mass of Soviet PW's and forced laborers in Western Europe, numbering more than 2 million, were sent back to the U. S. S. R.—in many cases over their violent objections. It is only within the past two years that the principle of political asylum has gradually reasserted itself—at first, clandestinely, and recently more openly. But let us not forget that if political asylum is to be meaningful, it must be accomplished by the food, the clothing, the medical supplies necessary to enable the escapes to undertake the reconstruction of shattered lives. Let me tell you what a group of Americans are doing in this respect:

“The American Friends of Russian Freedom” is a voluntary non-governmental American committee working on behalf of post-war Soviet escapees in Germany. No other agency could do this job because no other agency has the political, psychological and moral assets accruing to the independent operation of a private American committee concerned exclusively with Russians seeking their freedom. Their confidence in the ability and good faith of American citizens is of great importance. Especially so, after the rejection and indifference which has marked our policy toward the Russian people.

Apart from the humanitarian aspect, it is a psychological weapon in our hands to be able to establish housing projects, employment opportunities, agricultural training schools, and permanent resettlements on individual farms.

The French government has already encouraged refugee resettlement projects. France is said to have thousands of abandoned farms, a large percentage of which were given up only because there were no male children left in the remaining family to work the farm. About 50% of the post-war Russian escapees are of peasant origin, born and brought up in agricultural areas—usually, on collective farms. Most of these men have escaped from the Soviet army where they had been taken into military service with no training other than farming.

And more than this—the Moslems of South Central Asia differ from the Russians in religion, family history, language, customs, and way of life, and have a long tradition of open opposition to their Russian conquerors.

After thirty years of pressure, the Soviets have failed to remodel these peoples of Central Asia. The Soviets still encounter opposition there which can be used against them.

This program of inducement organized in depth in the countries of the West, propagandized in truth, could be a heavy blow to the Soviets. It would intensify their continuing fear of revolt, a fear inherent in all power that is founded on force.

In the satellite area, the same effort should be made to encourage escapees. It is easier to reach and help people in an occupied country when they have been conscripted into the enemy army than it is to reach those who have gone underground. If a patriot is drafted into the army of an invader, he is a patriot still. He is, therefore, not only a source of information but also a means of carrying words of hope to those in the underground. The possibilities are exemplified in the instance of the young Polish flyer who recently escaped in a jet plane to Denmark.

Also, on the continent of Europe, we can help those who have escaped imprisonment and who are prepared to build up in the Free West an international volunteer legion.

The final area of the unorthodox war in Europe embraces the Western European nations. Western Europe is second only to the United States among the world centers of industrial production. There, we must continue to support the newly created and ever-growing United Europe movement. This is the bastion across the path of Soviet expansion. Its security is of major importance in strategic planning—both for what it gives to Western strength and what it could give to the strength of any hostile power which made it captive. Were this bastion to fall, it would enable the Soviets to come to the Atlantic; and the Atlantic, to the Soviet Air Force, would be port of entry to the United States.

The unification of Europe has proceeded along two lines. Beginning in early 1948, close cooperation in economic, political and military matters has developed among the majority of the Western European nations through inter-governmental organizations. Help was given by the European Movement—a volunteer organization of citizens of the various countries of Europe concerned—and by the encouragement and support of the American Committee on United Europe—a group of American citizens.

In addition, since 1950, a smaller “hard core” of European states—Belgium, France, West Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands—have advanced beyond cooperation and are establishing federal institutions having the power to make decisions for the common membership in specific economic, military and political fields.

The Schuman Plan is now a going concern, and provides for a rapid expansion of coal and steel production necessary to meet defense needs and an increasing standard of living.

In August, 1950—two months after the assault on Korea—the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe responded to a motion by Winston Churchill and endorsed a resolution calling for: “. . . . the immediate creation under the authority of a Europ-

ean Minister of Defense of a European Army. . . .” and on October 24, 1950, France came forward with the “Pleven Plan,” which became the basis for negotiations that led to the signing of the European Defense Community Treaty in May, 1952.

On last March 10, after six months of work by the Assembly and its Constitutional Committee, the finished draft of a constitution was submitted to the six governments—France, Italy, Germany, Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg. If approved by the foreign ministers of these countries, it will be placed before the national parliaments for ratification.

With every concrete step toward the union of Europe, the opposition from left and right-wing extremes becomes more intense and more determined. We must recognize, for instance, that the French-German dispute over the Saar and the strength of the Social Democrats in Western Germany can block the completion of the six-nation European Army project and the peace contract between the federal government and the Big Three Western Powers. France has made it plain that the Saar dispute must be settled before the National Assembly can be asked to ratify the E. D. C.

Were the parliaments of these two countries to refuse ratification, it would seriously delay the realization of a United Europe and greatly impair the prestige, the influence and the leadership of our own country.

Across the Atlantic, the European movement is seeking to rally public opinion. Now, more than ever, European leaders in this fight need the encouragement and support of free citizens everywhere.

On our part, we Americans must recognize that the center of gravity in the world has moved to the United States. Thus, history has forced upon us a position of leadership—a responsibility we are reluctant to accept.

We are a people that want to be liked. We forget that the search for popularity has led other men and other nations down many bitter paths. As we move deeper into this great struggle, our friendship will be questioned, our sincerity challenged, our integrity traduced and our power despised.

Our aim must be to abide by the truth as we know it, by our principles as we hold them, so that we shall deserve the confidence of other nations in the wisdom and dependability of our leadership.

### **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF LECTURER**

Major General Donovan was born at Buffalo, New York, in 1883. He received degrees from Columbia University, Niagara University, University of Notre Dame, and Syracuse University. He began the practice of law at Buffalo in 1907, and served as counsel for New York State Fuel Administration. He was U. S. Attorney for the Western District of New York, and was Assistant Attorney General of the United States from 1924-25.

In World War I, he served as Captain of Troop 1, 1st Cavalry, New York National Guard; Assistant Chief of Staff, 27th Division, A. E. F., and became Colonel in command of the 165th Infantry Regiment (the old 69th, New York). This was the "Fighting 69th" of the famous Rainbow Division. During his army service he was wounded three times.

Major General Donovan was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, the Distinguished Service Cross, the Distinguished Service Medal, the Legion of Honor and Croix de Guerre with palm and silver star (France), and the Croci di Guerra (Italy).

He was unofficial observer for the Secretary of the Navy to Great Britain and southeastern Europe during 1940-41. He was appointed Coordinator of Information in 1941, and Director of Strategic Services in 1942—which position he held until the O. S. S. was disestablished in October, 1945. At present, he is practicing law and is a frequent speaker at the Naval War College.



**GROUP SESSION**